

# Addressing an Alleged Hadith Contradiction: Is Bartering Gold for Silver Conditional?

by

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## Argument

Saheeh Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 34, Hadith 344 says:

"The bartering of **gold for silver is Riba**, (usury), **except if it is from hand to hand and equal in amount**"

while Saheeh Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 34, Hadith 388 says:

The Prophet forbade the selling of gold for gold and silver for silver except if they are equivalent in weight, **and allowed us to sell gold for silver and vice versa as we wished.**"

The first hadith states that bartering gold for silver is Riba, except when you do it hand to hand and **equal in amount**. Yet, the second hadith states that you can do it **as you like**. This is while the first hadith calls it Riba (usury) to exchange gold for silver if done by any means except by exchange in equal amounts.

## Response

This is a good example illustrating why those who do not know Arabic and only rely on English translations are not qualified to discuss such matters.

This entire argument has arisen because of a translation error by M. Muhsin Khan. The actual Arabic text says, "**gold for gold** is Riba, (usury), except if it is from hand to hand and equal in amount" and not "gold for silver." Below is the Arabic text:

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، كَانَ عَمْرُو بْنُ دِينَارٍ يُحَدِّثُهُ عَنِ الرَّهْرِيِّ، عَنْ مَالِكِ بْنِ أَوْسٍ، أَنَّهُ قَالَ مَنْ عِنْدَهُ صَرَفَتْ فَقَالَ طَلَحَهُ أَنَا حَتَّى يَجِيءَ خَازِنُنَا مِنَ الْعَابَةِ. قَالَ سُفْيَانُ هُوَ الَّذِي حَفِظْنَاهُ مِنَ الرَّهْرِيِّ لَيْسَ فِيهِ زِيَادَةٌ. فَقَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي مَالِكُ بْنُ أَوْسٍ سَمِعَ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - يُخْبِرُ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " **الذَّهَبُ بِالذَّهَبِ رَبًّا إِلَّا هَاءَ وَهَاءَ، وَالنُّبْرُ بِالنُّبْرِ رَبًّا إِلَّا هَاءَ وَهَاءَ، وَالتَّمْرُ بِالتَّمْرِ رَبًّا إِلَّا هَاءَ وَهَاءَ، وَالشَّعِيرُ بِالشَّعِيرِ رَبًّا إِلَّا هَاءَ وَهَاءَ.**"

Anyone who could read Arabic may verify that it actually states "gold for gold" and not "gold for silver." This is nothing more than a translation error by M. Muhsin Khan.

If we check another translation by Aisha Bewley, we observe that she translated it correctly:

2027. It is related that Malik ibn Aws asked, "Who can change money?" Talha said, "I can when our treasurer returns from al-Ghaba."

Malik ibn Aws reported that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab was heard to say, "It is reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, '**Gold for gold** is usury except hand to hand. Wheat for wheat is usury except hand to hand. Dates for dates is usury except hand to hand. Barley for barley is usury except hand to hand.'"

In summary, there is no contradiction.